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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 USNATO 000555

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [MCAP](#) [NATO](#) [AS](#) [NZ](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: RFG: ISAF DECISION MAKING - INVOLVING NON-NATO
CONTRIBUTING NATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Ivo Daalder. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (SBU) This is a request for guidance. See para 4.

12. (SBU) Several non-NATO troop contributing nations to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, particularly Australia and New Zealand, have pressed for a larger role in the ISAF-related decision process at NATO HQ in Brussels. They have received support from a number of Allies, including the UK. In response to these requests, NATO Secretary General Rasmussen distributed to Allies on November 23 a non-paper proposing a number of pragmatic steps for strengthening in the short-term our dialogue and consultation on Afghanistan with non-NATO ISAF contributors (see para X below). He intends to have an informal PermRep discussion of the non-paper on Tuesday, December 1.

13. (C/REL NATO) Recommendations: We strongly support finding ways to further involve non-NATO troops contributing nations (NNTCNs), while also recognizing that there will be limits to how far we can go. With this in mind, we recommend the following response to the Secretary General's proposals:

-- For the foreseeable future, Afghanistan will remain NATO's top operational priority and should be discussed at NATO ministerials and Summits;

-- If Afghanistan is going to be discussed at a ministerial or summit, then the standard operating procedure should be to do this in an ISAF-format meeting, with both Allies and non-NATO troop contributors;

-- Moreover, any document that is going to be put out in the name of ISAF contributors, not NATO, should be negotiated from the beginning with non-NATO troop contributors. Summit and Ministerial statements are good examples of when this might apply;

-- We recognize that there may be times, however, when negotiating "at 45" may be too ponderous and that numbers might need to be reduced. In those cases, we would recommend that Allies negotiate with a representative sample of

non-NATO troop contributors. This could be accomplished by meeting in a format where each Regional Command is represented by a non-NATO troop contributing nation. We could, therefore, meet "at 33" (28 Allies, plus 5 NNTCNs representing the Regional Commands), rather than at 45. The NNTCN representation within each Regional Command would rotate.

-- We oppose the proposal in the non-paper of a Troika. This was proposed by the UK and seems to be intended to ensure the long-term involvement of Australia and New Zealand, but would run the serious risk of creating divisions by appearing to set a "two-tier standard" for involvement of non-NATO troops contributors. In a November 27 meeting with Ambassador Daalder, the Australian and New Zealand Ambassadors acknowledged this and said that they were planning to tell the UK they opposed the proposal. (Note: They also indicated that they were extremely happy with the paper overall.)

-- We must continue to maintain the distinction between non-NATO troops contributors and other partners, such as Russia, who do not contribute troops.

¶4. (C) RFG: Unless otherwise directed, Ambassador Daalder intends to draw from the recommendations in para three above during the December 1 PermRep discussion.

¶5. (SBU) The text of the SecGen's non-paper (which was e-mailed to EUR/RPM) is reproduced below:

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BEGIN TEXT

ISAF Decision Making -- Involving the Non-NATO Contributing Nations

¶1. At Bratislava, several Defence Ministers of non-NATO ISAF contributing nations intervened strongly on the issue of consultation and involvement in the development of policy documents. While actions have been taken in recent months to strengthen their involvement, a number of these nations remain dissatisfied with current arrangements. This non-paper sets out pragmatic and quick to implement proposals for improved dialogue and consultation with regard only to the ISAF operation. In the longer term we might wish to consider whether the Political-Military Framework for NATO-Led Partnership for Peace Operations needs to be revised.

¶2. Council Meetings. One of the most vocal complaints of non-NATO ISAF partners is a lack of early involvement in issues of interest, associated with a compressed timescale for them to consider issues in capitals. While an increasing number of ISAF issues are discussed in ISAF format, we could do more. Our default position should be that key ISAF decisions are from the outset discussed formally in ISAF format. This will require the scheduling of additional meetings in this format (Council, Policy Coordination Group, Military Committee, Working Groups, etc.), but it provides an opportunity which should be well received by non-NATO ISAF partners, and which can be implemented immediately. We will also need to consider the handling of such issues in an informal setting. Frequently, key issues are discussed in a luncheon (or similar) format before placing them on the agenda for regular Council meetings. The consequence of this is that ideas can become crystallized before they are discussed in a formal setting, and non-NATO ISAF partners can be left with the impression that they are being presented with a fait accompli. We should therefore also consider holding informal Council discussions in ISAF format when key issues justify this. On the other hand, we should not exclude that some issues related to our engagement in Afghanistan would be sensitive to the Alliance's interests as such and that Allies therefore would need to discuss such issues at ¶28. This may particularly be the case as the group of

non-NATO ISAF contributing nations continues to widen, both geographically and politically.

13. Ministerial Meetings and Summits. It is increasingly the case that high-level meetings of the Council are scheduled in ISAF format. This should be the norm, at least while the tempo of the mission remains at current levels. However, we need to consider also the involvement of other stakeholders in these meetings. The presence of EU, UN and Afghan authorities is important, but there is a risk that discussion will be inhibited in the presence of these players. We should consider scheduling Ministerial meetings where attendance is limited only to Allies and non-NATO ISAF partners. This in itself would be a strong signal to our partners. We would need, however, to schedule a further session in an expanded format when the inclusion of other stakeholders was considered necessary.

14. Development of Policy Documents. Once again, committee procedures have already been adapted to be more inclusive. However, while non-NATO ISAF partners are kept well informed throughout this process, they are not invited to contribute formally until an issue is agreed 'at 28'. It is seldom the case that comments subsequently provided by non-NATO ISAF contributors require us to re-open an issue, but this could be partly due to a reluctance on the behalf of our partners to delay the process. We should therefore consider inviting input from non-NATO ISAF contributors throughout the development process while Allies' deliberations are going on.

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This would strengthen the principles of transparency and inclusion of the Political-Military Framework, and it would reflect the importance of non-NATO involvement in the ISAF mission. And it could be a pragmatic start from which we will gain experience for a potential subsequent revision of the Political-Military Framework.

15. Improved Information Sharing. There will inevitably be issues that come up at 28, either by circumstance, or by necessity. We should institute a system of prompt ex post facto briefings to inform non-NATO contributing nations when this occurs, probably delivered by the Assistant Secretary General for Operations. We might also elevate the current regular informal working level meetings that the Assistant Secretary General for Operations currently holds with non-NATO contributors to Ambassadorial level from time to time.

16. A Non-NATO 'Troika'. It has been suggested that a smaller group of non-NATO nations might be formed as a conduit for information flow regarding Afghanistan. This concept might see a single representative nation, supported by two others on a rotational basis. Arguably, this would be less cumbersome, and logistically easier than holding meetings 'at 43'. A variation on this idea might be to have each of the Regional Commands represented by a single non-NATO Contributing Nation. But there are dangers here. Could such a group be truly representative of 'the 15', and would it be seen as divisive? By definition, some nations would receive key information before others, and this is likely to generate a 'them and us' split within the group of partners.

17. In summary, we have improved our consultation with non-NATO ISAF partners considerably over the recent years; but it is clear that a number of these nations feel strongly that we could do more. The steps outlined above are consistent with our aspiration for full transparency and involvement, and would be seen as a pragmatic approach which addresses concerns raised at Bratislava and elsewhere. In addition, they are quick deliverables. There are potential implications for the wider Political Military Framework, but they will have to be addressed at a later stage.

END TEXT
DAALDER